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## **PUBLIC ART MATTERS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF**

The City of Raleigh Arts Commission is launching a multi-faceted, community-engaging campaign to raise awareness of the importance of public art entitled “Public Art Matters.”

Over the coming year, the Commission’s Public Art Committee will host a range of events and activities that explore why “Public Art Matters,” starting this month with the “Public Art Is A Building Block Box-In” on Saturday, September 18 as part of the SPARKcon Festival in Downtown Raleigh.

The “Box-In” will coincide with the unveiling of the new *Art on City Plaza* sculptures, which will be dedicated on the same day (at noon) by Mayor Charles Meeker and Laura Raynor, chair of the Arts Commission.

For several months, the Public Art Committee has been planning and designing a special build-it-yourself paper box that symbolizes public art as an essential building block for the creation of engaging, imaginative spaces. The boxes feature images of public art around the city and information pertaining to the impact of public art on the

city, from expressing Raleigh's identity and attracting visitors to promoting civic pride and creating inviting, memorable public spaces.

On September 18, Arts Commissioners and other volunteers will bring several large cardboard boxes, painted white, to City Plaza along with templates of the paper boxes. Besides building their own boxes to take with them, the public will be invited to paint, draw on, and write on the larger boxes, expressing what public art means to them.

"September is really Public Art Month in Raleigh," said June Guralnick, executive director for the Raleigh Arts Commission. "SPARKcon is an ideal time to launch 'Public Art Matters' because this creativity festival demonstrates how Raleigh continues to mature as a creative capital city. It is essential that we educate our citizens about the very real benefits our city receives from supporting public art."

Ms. Guralnick noted that the month of public art activities starts with the dedication of Jim Gallucci's "Immigrant Gate II" sculpture in Millbrook Exchange Park today at noon.

Later in the year, public art advocates will facilitate public "conversations" around the city to inform and involve the general public in learning more about public art.

The campaign follows in the footsteps of a civic initiative that began in 2009 when the City of Raleigh created its Percent for Public Art program that sets aside one half of one percent of municipal construction funds for the creation of public art. Prior to this program's establishment, the Raleigh Arts Commission developed select public artworks funded primarily with private donations, including the popular Red Wolf Ramble, as well as Art-in-the-Park sculptures. Additionally, over the past few years, the commission has sponsored, in partnership with Capital Area Transit, Art-On-The-Move which features original art on the sides of Raleigh buses, as well as developing temporary and permanent art for Raleigh's City Plaza.

Established in 1977 as the official advisory body and advocate for the arts to the Raleigh City Council, the City of Raleigh Arts Commission holds the distinction of being the first municipal arts commission created in North Carolina. Serving as the leading force to champion the arts with Raleigh citizens and their representatives, the Arts Commission's myriad activities foster, support, and promote the arts in the Capital City.

For more information about "Public Art Matters," contact [june.guralnick@raleighnc.gov](mailto:june.guralnick@raleighnc.gov) call 996-3610, or visit [www.raleighnc.gov/arts](http://www.raleighnc.gov/arts). For more information on SPARKcon, visit [www.sparkcon.com](http://www.sparkcon.com).

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